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# Intergalactic Diplomacy Blues



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## Chapter 1 by Harlander

The cultures that attended the Galactic Conference on Cooperation all held it to be true that, as an ancient Human leader once said, "to jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war". Not all of these member states' citizens had jaws in the sense that Churchill would have understood, but the attitude was the same: they'd settle their differences with words rather than gamma-ray lasers and collapsed-antimatter sub-munitions.

Xrijisti Cersid clicked his mandibles in annoyance as his colleague, Frank Sanderson, thumped him on the upper shoulder. "You're coming to the section barbecue tomorrow, right?" There was something about Frank's manner that always grated on Cersid. He was too boisterous, too loud. Some humans were just like that. He bobbed his head in an approximation of a human nod, though.

"I wouldn't miss it. I'm bringing a memjiq-tlak spike to roast some Cheem." Cersid may not have cared for Frank, but he did love a chance to show off Xajorkithian cuisine.

Suddenly, section head ---+---+---+ appeared in the office doorway. Everyone else cringed. --+--

---+-- better known as "2plus" to people who couldn't pronounce their real name (almost everyone else in the office) was ---+--'s second-in-command. Unfortunately, their voice was a barely audible super-sonic equal punishment with sound like rusty metal being torn apart. "All hands on deck."

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"We've got a real situation brewing. Could be a sticky mess if we don't get things smoothed over."

"What is it, boss?" Frank asked.

"Well, let me tell you...."

## Chapter 2 by R



"... Just a few hours ago, there was a bar fight on Amaris Major."

"A bar fight?" Cersid questioned, confused. He knew the term, of course, as he was knowledgeable with many cultures for the job, but it didn't seem to be their area of concern.

"I know, I know." 2plus continued. "It turns out the crown princeling of the United Amaris Monarchy snuck out to go to a bar, where zel ended up flirting with the Diplomat from Zastella, when the Diplomat's drunken mate, a commander in the Zastellan Military, and the princeling's ex showed up. There was a very large fight, and now the princeling is in intensive care."

"That's serious." Someone else commented. "What's the reaction from Zastella and Amaris?"

"Amaris is on the brink of declaring war. Zastella is just annoyed enough that they might fight back. Which is why we'll be sending Frank Sanderson and Xrijisti Cersid to investigate exactly what happened and gather all of the information on the reactions on all parties. Then, formulate a plan of operations. Everyone else is going to be thinking of potential response plans."

2plus looked over the crowd. "This is an emergency. No delays. The flight to Amaris will be leaving in twenty minutes. Your bags are already being packed and will be sent there. Understood?"

"Understood." Frank and Cersid said at once, walking quickly towards the door. Another day, another mission. Hopefully this one will end better than the last had.

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"Tight squeeze, right?" Frank laughed, leaning across Cersid and hailing down the flight attendant. "Oh gawds, I gotta fart. I THINK I gotta fart. Yeah, I gotta fart. Should I try and suppress it by releasing it into the seat, or let it out full-blast in the bathroom?"

"Yes, sir?" asked the thin Nektorine flight attendant.

"Into the seat, or the bathroom?" Frank asked her.

"I'm sorry sir, I don't understand."

"I'm kidding. What time are we landing?"

"Our estimated arrival time is in forty-two minutes."

"Terrific. You've solved my conundrum. The bathroom it is, since there's time."

Frank began to clamber over Cersid.

"Be back in a tick."

Cersid sighed deeply and flipped through the briefing notes one more time in front of him. The face of the Zastellan commander who had assaulted the princeling was on top.

Forty-two minutes.

If he could put up with Frank's nonsense for one more mission... he would simply request a partner transfer from 2plus. Yes. It was just... too much: Frank's personality. He was effective as a diplomat, yes. But an absolute jackanape behind the scenes.

The last time they had worked together, Frank had thought it funny to slip a solid-fortunium dildo purchased in the duty free shop into Cersid's carry-on luggage (which of course set off the security detector at the space-port, having not been checked through properly).

Embarrassing. Infantile humour. Absolutely embarrassing. Cersid had had enough of it.

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Cersid's mind roamed to thoughts of the section party he was missing. He imagined Bagrunda Bies, the section accountant, and wondered how she would be dressed for the event.

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Suddenly, an explosion ripped through the ship, evacuating all the air and causing Cersid black out.

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Somewhere below, in low orbit around the planet was a Zastellan frigate. Its starboard ion cannons had sheared the commercial craft in two with the first burst, and First Lieutenant Skratts swivelled in the pleather gunner's chair to gauge his commander's reaction.

"Damn fine shooting," said the Zastellan commander: the very same that Cersid had been reading about in his briefing notes just moments before. Beside him, the Amarisian princeling, Zel Goldstein watched.

"That will do," said Zel, grinning. "We have the Galactic Conference by all six balls now."

#### Chapter 4 by intellikat



2plus' voice screeched over the hubbub of the section barbecue, causing two employees' eardrums to rupture and a third to begin bleeding from the nose.

"Code Vee-Six-Nine-Seven-Orghas! We have confirmation of an attack on the commercial flight that was transporting our two agents to Amaris Major. The shuttle was destroyed by an unknown vessel that was hidden from surface scanners at the time of the attack. All essential personnel report to the briefing room immediately! And stop drinking!"

Shocked, and somewhat annoyed at now missing the barbecue, about a dozen personnel either drained or placed their half-filled cups aside and headed for the briefing room. Bagrunda Biles stood in her jet-black lunaskirt. Her face registered concern.

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"To... us?"

"That's right. Specifically to the Galactic Conference. And our section: Region V697. How do you get the-- the right input-- is it Video 2? I can't get the input right here--"

One of the others took the remote from 2plus and in a moment the screen flared up and a video began. It showed the image of a blue-tinted alien dressed in a crisp white shirt and a black tri-tie.

"Galactic Conference on Cooperation. This is Vice Pastoral Caretaker Lujash of the Chiljorq. Your delegation on Cooperation members have been eliminated under a Declaration of Justice, stated points 82 and 117 is the Chiljorq Handbook for War, sub-points three and eighteen, respectively."

"What the--" hissed 2plus. "Anyone familiar with the Chiljorqi? Someone see if they can find thus War Handbook he's speaking about!"

"The transport ship in question was serving alcoholic beverages in excess of 0.5% ABV as well as employing air hostesses wearing skirts above the knee-line. We have executed swift justice upon the wrongdoers. There is no need to thank us. We are informing all families of the deceased in a similar manner. Have a nice day. And all hail The Great Overjorq, may She hum in grandeur. Ha-babba Ree!"

The screen winked out again.

"Sir!" called one of the desk agents. "The Chiljorq Handbook for War... I've found it. An archaic religious text that most Chiljorqi no longer follow or even are fully familiar with. But there are always some fundamentalist groups that adhere to its teachings. We haven't heard of anything like this for hundreds of years-- maybe longer. These groups certainly have never had something like a starship to back up their rantings."

"Sir!" another agent was sneaking up now. "We've got some activity from Amaris Major. The royal hospital is reporting to us the death of the princeling due to complications from injuries sustained in the bar fight. The King is ready to declare war, but the Ambassador has contacted us."

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2plus looked around the room at a loss.

Suddenly, his six balls began to ache.

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Somewhere in low orbit, Xrijisti Cersid's eyes jerked awake to the clarity of space and orb that was Amaris Major. He suddenly realized that he was breathing, and looked around.

Beside him, and holding an evacuation mask to Cerise's face, was Frank Sanderson. He gave a quick thumbs-up and grinned. Then he pointed to something beyond the wreckage of what had been their transport shuttle.

The Zastellan frigate.

Undetectable to scanners, but visible at this distance to the naked eye, the ship's unmistakable outline shimmered ever so slightly against the backdrop of the greenish planet.

Frank pointed again, grinned, and then pointed to his rear end.

Frank grabbed Cersid by the back-loop and then emitted a tremendous fart, which propelled the two directly toward the frigate,

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